DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 190 777 CE 026 122

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TITLE Coping and Adaptation in Midlife Dual Career Families.
PUB DATE Sep 79
NOTE 35p.: Paper presented at the American Psychological Association Annual Convention (87th, New York, NY, September 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Development: Adults: Attitudes: *Coping: Developmental Tasks: Employed Parents: *Employed Women: Family (Sociological Unit): *Family Relationship: Family Structure: Females: *Individual Development: Middle Aged Adults: *Personality Traits: Role Perception: Sex Role: Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Dual Career Families

ABSTRACT

Findings are presented from a study of the midlife dual career family (in which both members of the couple are professionally employed and are highly committed to their work, and where there may or may not be children present). Focus is on the attitudes, perspectives, and personality characteristics of the dual career wife, and distinction is made between the woman who has been in a continuous career pattern since her 20s and the midlife woman who is newly entered into a professional career. Data referred to throughout the discussion is drawn from a series of in-depth case studies of dual career families which included twenty-three people (eighteen of them women) who ranged in age from twenty-two to fifty-two and in education from high school equivalency to Ph.D. Three issues (common themes, tasks, and dilemmas) are examined which relate to intrapsychic development: (1) emergence of contrasexual opposites (independence vs. interdependence), (2) transition to the second half of life, and (3) awareness of death. The other three issues dealt with examine individual development as related to the larger social structure: (4) the additive nature of the dual career woman's concept of career, (5) relationship to aging parents, and (6) midlife women's view of other women. Finally five strategies of coping and adaptation identified from the case material are described: structural changes occur in the traditional marriage pattern, one or both partners take up a stagnant position in terms of growth, one or both partners assume a regressive position, marriage system dissolves, and enhanced opportunities are found for growth and individualism for both partners. (JT)

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COPING AND ADAPTATION IN MIDLIFE

DUAL CAREER FAMILIES*

by

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*Paper presented as part of the symposium: Midlife Development: Influence of Gender, Personality and Social Systems: American Psychological Association 87th Annual Convention, New York, September 1979

CE 026 122

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COPING AND ADAPTATION IN MIDLIFE DUAL CAREER FAMILIES

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COPING AND ADAPTATION IN MIDLIFE DUAL CAREER FAMILIES

1. INTRODUCTION

> I want it all...wife, mother, career...I think it's going to be a lot of hard work...expect that...I'm not a prima donna... I may not be able to work it out the way I think, but I believe I can do all these things successfully...

The speaker, M.R., is a dual career woman, about 32 years old, employed as a mid-level executive in a large organization. She is eight months pregnant with her first child. Her story and that of others like her, in earlier and later life stages, is the focus of this presentation. We will identify some common themes, tasks, and dilemmas , and some patterns of coping and adaptation which have emerged from our analysis of dual career (d.c.) case studies. Included are examples ofcouples who seem unable to make the adaptations required by this non-traditional pattern, and others who apparently have not only maximized their individual developmental potentiality, but also enhanced the quality of their marriage relationship through the d.c. pattern.

Our research to date is summarized in the following chart: A Systems Viewpoint of Dual Career Families. (see insert next page). Dual career themes are presented within a social systems framework; the issues of marriage, family and career are identified at successive stages in the family life cycle including Early marriage; Decision stage:Will we Have Children?; Young Family; Midlife, Children living at Home;and Midlife, Adult Children.

The present discussion will focus on the midlife d.c. family and particularly on the attitudes, perspectives and personality characteristics

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A SYSTEMS VIEW OF DUAL CAREER FAMILY ISSUES

	EARLY MARRIAGE	WILL WE DECISION STAGE: START A FAMILY?	YOUNG FAMILY	MIDLIFE CHILDREN at HOME/ADULT CHILDREN
MARRIAGE	Breaking away from family work out relationship with spouse's family Establish intimacy Need to experiment with styles of planning, decision-making flexibility Stress: finances, new boundaries re spouse, family, friends, work	Complete break with family Establish patterns of decision making, planning Established intimacy Stress: finances, decision re children Divorce for financial reasons discussed Female: confrontation with questions re sexual identity	Previous structure of relationship to each other needs adjustment due to needs of baby Stress: Child care, physical demands on time, role ambiguity (esp for wife) Finances may be handled separately	Growing awareness of independence Need to establish new ways of relating to spouse without children Need to re-structure dominance/submission relationship Re-establish relationship as independent person, as separated from parent roles
FAMILY	Flexibility Role differentiation Leadership style	Two-stage Model 1. Avoid all serious discussion of topic 2. Discuss topic constantly; Realization that wife's life will change most Husband's attitude is critical	Child care, key issue HIghest point of physical demand in terms of child, work, spouse Flexibility critical; mutual support essential Pattern of interrelationships need careful boundaries Growing financial needs	Highest point of demand for emotional support for children Financial needs very high Flexibility is critical Ability to see family as grown Learn to sep-separate self from children Relationship to elderly parents becomes an issue
CAREER	Need to identify career, complete training Enter into work environment Decision on long term commitment to field Competition	Need to invest in own career Complete further training, if necessary Possible transfer dilemmas Competition high Stress; Balance between needs of spouse and career demands	HIghest point of career demand Balance between career and family most difficult to achieve Transfer, promotion implications Possibility of living in two separate cities for maximum career advancement	Need to balance career pressure with new relationship to spouse Career demands high Second career or career entry is possible Career demands lowered for those in continuous careers; higher for those in new careers Need to accept limitations re possible accomplishments

of the d.c. wife. Without minimizing the significance of the husband's role, it is apparent that the woman holds the uniquely new social role-- in establishing an integrated wife/mother/career identify. Husband/father/career is, of course, well established. Women are creating, by their pursuit of a non-traditional combination of adult choices, a new set of circumstances, a new set of stresses as well as a new set of opportunities for fulfillment and individuation. Therefore, the woman's perception of self and others, her behaviors and feelings, seem an appropriate launch point for this inquiry. In starting from this perspective, we nevertheless hope to avoid oversimplification, recognizing that given the very complicated inter-relatedness of the marriage and family system, a change in any one part, of course, affects every other part.

We will distinguish between the midlife d.c.woman who has been in a continuous career pattern since her 20's and the midlife woman who is newly entered into a professional career, since obviously, they bring a very different history to their midlife experience. We will also present some data which suggests that younger d.c. women, those now around age 30-35, seem to be experiencing a developmental process which has in the past been considered a midlife phenomenon. Therefore, younger d.c. women are included in this analysis in order to suggest ways of re-thinking previously identified age/stage demarcations as well as to suggest implications for future research.

The d.c. family, where both members of the couple are professionally employed and are highly committed to their work, and where there may or may not be children present, represents a new social pattern which is becoming increasingly common. We use the term professional career to designate not only an extended period of preparation, but also the notion that one's work is central to one's sense of identity and self esteem This view is well expressed by one d.c. subject:

"My identity is not only in my work, but there's a very good fit..."

Contemporary professional couples bring not only an uncharted set of occupational problems, but also a new set of psychosocial and philosophical constructs to the traditional marriage structure, including a preoccupation with independence, achievement and individuation.

The d.c. pattern seems to be everywhere; e.g. about 90% of those present at a recent meeting of a community college faculty, described themselves as members of a d.c. family. Yet, there are very few established d.c. success models, and even fewer guidelines for prediction of behavior which will enhance prospects for success in the three domains that M.R. refers to above: wife,mother, career. D.C. families can't refer to any generational continuity to suggest behavior, or even to suggest behavior change. The traditional family marker events, e.g. the age of marriage, or the birth of the first child, even the nature and timing of the midlife period of re-evaluation,seem to be in the process of being altered--at least for some of the d.c. couples we studied.

This presentation, part of an on-going study of d.c. families, is based on a series of in-depth case studies, which included 23 people (18 women and 5 men) who ranged in age from 22 to 52; in education from high school equivalency to the Ph.D, and in family stage from no children to those with married children. All subjects were employed at least 30 hours a week in a professional position; all are either married or living with someone in what they describe as a permanent arrangement. All are middle class, mostly white (one Black, one Oriental) Our analysis is based on a combination of interviews (between 4-8 hours, and projectives.

We recognize that given this population, our analysis is limited to a very small percentage of all those couples where both partners are employed. We view this perspective, however, as a useful starting point in analysis of the d.c. phenomenon. (see Appendix A for further description of subjects)

Following a very brief reference to some existing d.c. viewpoints reported in the literature, we will examine major midlife themes and issues which are particularly relevant to the d.c. family system, including:

Emergence of Contrasexual Opposites

Transition to the Second Half of Life

Awareness of Death

Additive Nature of D.C. Women's Concept of Career

Relationship to Aging Parents

Midlife Women's View of Other Women

As can be seen, the first three issues relate to intrapsychic development, the last three to individual development as related to the larger social structure.

Finally, we will suggest some strategies of coping and adaptation which have been identified from analysis of the case material.

II. VIEWPOINTS IN THE LITERATURE

Recent analyses of the d.c.pattern have focused on d.c. families from the psychosocial (Rapoport 1971,1978; Johnson 1978; Huser 1976; Burke 1976; St.John-Parsons 1978) and organizational (Hall &Hall 1979; Holmstrom 1972; Hunt & HUnt 1977) perspectives. The first view examines issues, trends,dilemmas of two career couples as a deviant form of family development; the second analyzes the problems of matching the needs of the couple as a unit to the individual's career growth and the needs of the organization.

Adding to these critical viewpoints, this presentation will present a systems perspective, which can serve to enhance our understanding of the significant issues at stake. The systems perspective enables us to focus on the simultaneous nature of the multiple forces at work, including the complex interplay of individual personality and developmental growth and change, issues related to the stage and nature of the couple's development as a unit, related to individual

career development, to behavior and relationship toward children, toward professional peers, and finally, to aging parents. The more deeply we study the d.c. phenomena, the more we are aware of the rich co-mingling of interdependent elements which must be considered in any effort to do justice to this complex development. To repeat, we are aware that, as in all systems, any alteration of any one part --- in this case the alteration is the female role---will surely and directly alter all other parts.

111. ISSUES RELEVANT TO MIDLIFE DUAL CAREER COUPLES

Several common themes bearing on midlife development have emerged from previous research as well as our case studies which highlight issues of particular relevance to d.c. couples. We will briefly present some of these issues.

1. Emergence of the Contrasexual Opposite - - Issues of Independence vs Interdependence

It has been stated (Neugarten, 1964, Gutmann 1974, Cytrynbaum et al 1978 that somewhere around midlife there is a major shift in gender orientation. Previously denied aspects of one's sexual identity appear to emerge with new and relentless force in midlife. Thus midlife men are seen to become more passive, nurturant, affiliative, interdependent; midlife women to become more outgoing, dominant, assertive, independent. Gutmann and Neugarten refer to this as a shift in the dominance/submission polarities.

Let us examine the working hypothesis that there is a midlife shift in gender orientation, women becoming more instrumental,men more affective, in relation to the d.c. family. This analysis will be limited to consideration of d.c. women at three age/stage positions in the family cycle:

a) young women in their early 30's, before the birth of the first child

b) midlife women, with children still living at home

c) midlife women with adult children.

a) Young women

Rapoport (1978) recently noted that there is a serious gap in research into the question of sexuality and sex role identity within the d.c. pattern. Given the accelerated pace of social change, it certainly seems possible that we will find a significant psychosocial lag between external behavior (.i.e., living in a d.c. modality)and the internalized ideal of the feminine self.

Our research suggests that the high point of conflict re sexual identity will be experienced most dramatically by career oriented childless women in their early 30's. Consider the case of the woman who is beginning a d.c. marriage with high career goals, commitment, high n. achievement and independence, a firm track record of approval (from self and others) for independence and assertion, and who is married to a husband who supports and enhances that assertion, independence, autonomy. We assume, that having learned to experience herself in these ways, as independent, dominant and successful, that those patterns are established. Can we also assume that they accurately reflect her sense of identity as a woman?

It's useful to recall the Hennig and Jardin (1977) study of the lives of exceptionally successful career women. At about age 30-35 they all went through periods of self-scrutiny, of introspection, of coming to grips with their femininity which had previously been denied. Then they were able to go on with their career and/or marriag-

We have very little data on whether this d.c. woman's ability to function in a so-called male world represents a denial of femininity in favor of masculine characteristics which have been the power roles in our society (i.e.,superimposing a male personna) or whether her femininity is being expressed in an altered form. Clinical observation seems to suggest that independence exhibited by contemporary young women is not giving way to an interdependent style which was characteristic of earlier female generations. Is this interdependence important or critical for successful mothering?

In order to fully experience her nurturant, affiliative, emotional self as a mother, will this woman have to, or be able to, integrate those other parts of herself? If so, this phenomena would occur at an earlier age than adult developmentalists have noted so far. (Jung 1968 and others cite midlife as the period of ability to integrate the contrasexual opposites.)

We have wondered if the role strain and role ambiguity cited so frequently by d.c. authors (Johnson 1978, Hall & Hall 1979, Rapoport 1971) and particularly in reference to young career mothers, could be the manifestation of this intra - psychic ambivalence and the struggle around this issue. A similar period of struggl of self re-evaluation, of coming to grips with formerly repressed or denied parts of self has been identified for men, as coming later in life, labeled as we know, the midlife crisis. (Jaques 1965)

Yet we are suggesting that intrapsychic developmental patterns seen in young d.c. women seem strikingly similar to those previously observed in midlife men. Is this apparent development only a superficial, temporary phase; or does it represent a more integrated psychological position? Our early findings have led us to a series of questions which remain to be explored in greater depth as our research continues.

Stuart's analysis (1977) of the development of sexual identity provides a useful framework for our discussion. Expanding Levinson's work(1978), Stuart suggests that there are two distinct early life Dreams* -- the Relational Dream which is formed primarily around relationships with others especially through marriage and motherhood, and the Individualistic Dream which reflects the need to, "... become a certain kind of individual, most typically through forming a career identity" (p.79) The latter represents the culturally validated male position; the former, the traditional female position.

*"Dream" is well defined by Gaston(1978) as,"...more than a fantasy and less than a detailed plan; it is a crucial agent and source of purpose...an evanescent image of one's evolving identity projected into the world."(p.2)

Some of the women interviewed in the present study made very plain that an either/or dichotomy on this Individualistic/Relational scale is too simplistic; that instead, as the developmental process evolves, one moves up and back between the two positions. What is occuring is the struggle toward integration of both the masculine and feminine positions. This phenomenon is illustrated is the discussion which follows.

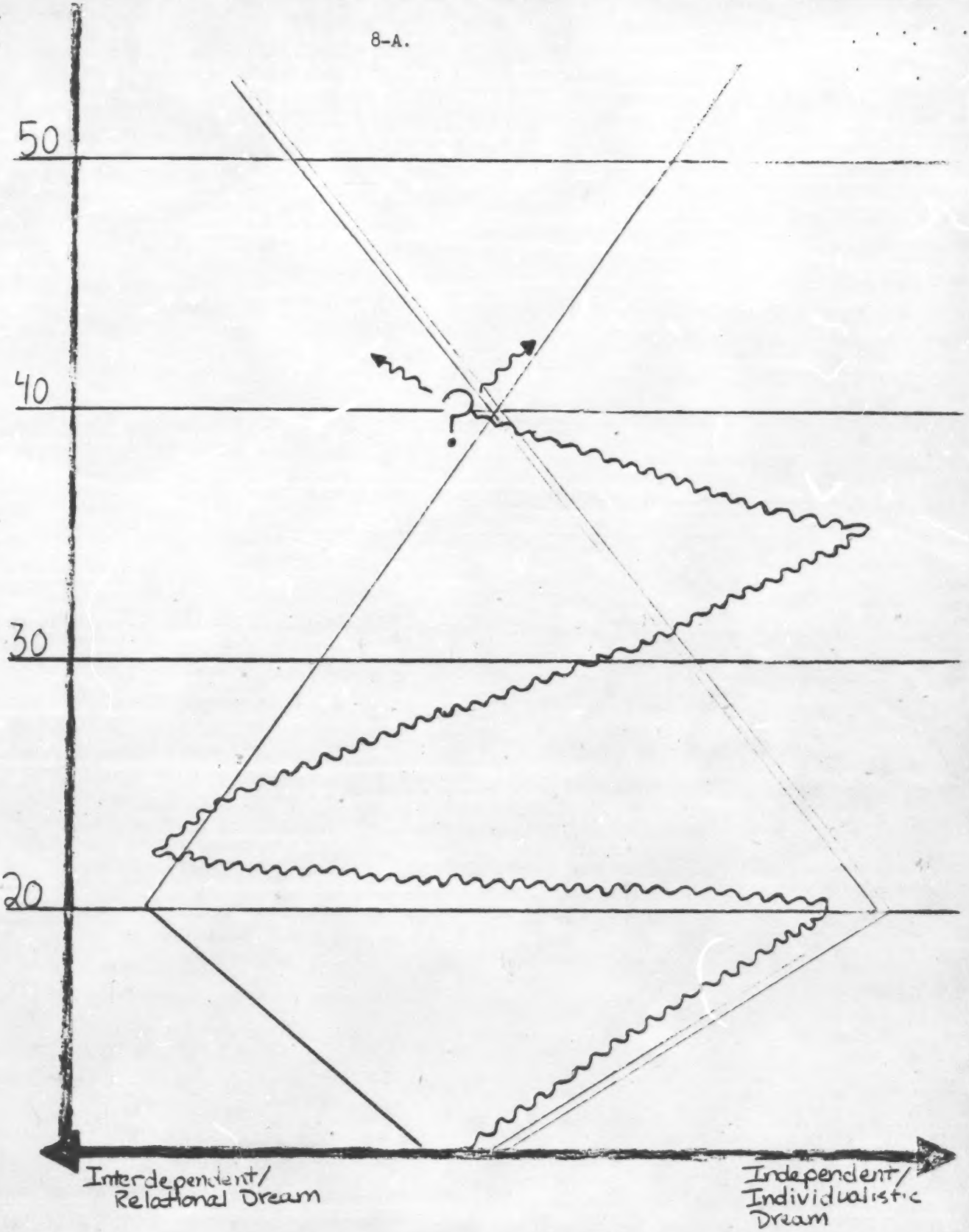
b) Midlife Women: Children at Home

The critical issues related to the emergence of the contrasexual opposite parts of self look somewhat different moving from childless women in their early 30's to the d.c. woman who is between 35 and 40 and who has children still living at home.

One such case is illustrated in the diagram on the following page, which focuses on the swings in behavior between the extreme individualistic/independent position and the relational/interdependent one. This particular case is an example of a midlife woman who has had a continuous career path.

Although for purposes of illustration, the process of development seems to flow in a steady line, in reality there is a constant ebb & flow, regressive as well as progressive pulls, moving in the general direction as indicated.

On the chart, the solid line represents traditional women, who have had an Individualistic Dream prior to age 20. As a girl growing up, this woman was rewarded for independent achievement, primarily related to school achievement. However, she gradually forms a greater part of her identity through external approval and the wish to be needed and to nurture. Bardwick (1971) argues that as girls reach adolescence their sources of approval are based on affiliation, with a sense of interdependence, as opposed to earlier approval for individual achievement as well as affiliative behaviors. By age 20, the traditional woman may have reached an interdependent position, similar to what Stuart labels a Relational Dream. However, as seen on the chart, as she matures, she moves toward greater independence, instrumentality, achievement, toward the Individualistic Dream pole. (Neugarten 68)



KEY:

——— Traditional Women

═══ Traditional Men

~~~ Case Study K.S.

SHIFT IN INDEPENDENCE/INTERDEPENDENCE ORIENTATION
~~~

The double line on the chart represents the traditional male position. Starting at an early age in the externalized, achieving, independent, individualistic position, traditional men move toward more nurturant, affiliative, interdependent, relational sense of self.

The curved line represents a 40 year old d.c. woman (case study K.S.) who has been working full time for the past eleven years. As we can see on the chart, she moves up and back between independence and interdependence, struggling to balance the pulls between her needs for achievement, power,autonomy, separation vs needs for nurturance, affiliation, dependence and fusion. We can see that at about age 24, when her two children are born,she is far to the extreme interdependent pole.

At least this is the way she appears behaviorally. When we probe more deeply however, we find that she was never psychologically invested in this behavior. Her basic self configuration remained fixed at the independent pole. Very soon after her two children were born she began to recognize that her frustration and dissatisfaction stemmed from the fact that her relational/interdependent behavior was not consistent with her primary sense of self, with the way she really saw herself, with what Stein (1979) has labeled the dominant pattern of self identification.

Responding to this internal pressure, she moves quickly to the extreme opposite pole, so that by the time she's in her early 30's, once again she's highly independent, living out the Individualistic Dream. By about age 40, once again, she seems to be swinging back to an interdependent position, only this time, she is caught in the middle and really doesn't know which way she'll go.

This sense of fluctuation through progressive stages in ways of experiencing oneself in relation to others, is described by Karpel (1976) as the process of movememnt to individuation from fusion. Karpel describes the middle stage, as

ambivalence, which is experienced as acute emotional swings between two fears, i.e., of either being swallowed through fusion, or being isolated through separation. Case K.S. seems to be caught very much in this dilemma.

The language she uses to describe her current position, which is represented by the question mark on the chart, is very reminiscent of the way the male midlife crisis has been described, i.e., as a questioning of the meaning and value of one's life, with the implied need for restructuring of the basic elements before life can continue. (Levinson 1978)

K.S. describes herself: "I feel as if I'm in the middle of a huge colorless dessert...an existential crisis...not really sure that it makes one damn bit of difference what I do anymore..my work doesn't take on the meaning that it used to."

Although she's at a career decision point where growth demands a reinvestment of her time and energy, she says,"I'm not as mesmerized by the concept of achievement anymore..."

An accumulation of recent traumatic family events -- the death of her mother, serious illness of a daughter, and the shaky state of her marriage -- compound the present crisis for K., and illustrate the very complex intermingling of intrapsychic, marital and career issues that midlife d.c. couples may face.

Another case study expressed the continuous nature of the efforts to integrate aspects of self, and the persistent need to work toward incorporating these opposing forces. Unlike K.S. above, H.J., age 37, is just starting her d.c. life. Having just completed professional training, she is in the process of applying for her first job. Responding to a new TAT-type projective measure* (illustration showing woman in office, with pictures of male and two children)... H.J. says, "...opening up an office...the first client is waiting to come in...and she goes

* MTAT Copywrite, 1979, Carole A. Wilk and Marcia H. Wilk

over to the desk and she says (to the pictures)... I've made it..here I am...give me your blessing...you're going to be a little watching me, too."

Through this response, H.J. provides a glimpse of the struggle she's experiencing in trying to create a balance between the press for independence and professional growth and achievement ("I've made it, here I am.") vs the relational self, as wife/mother, wanting, asking their blessing, i.e., their permission to start her new life. Some of her ambivalence and insecurity is displayed as she says, almost fearfully, "you're going to be a little watching me, too."

c) Midlife Women; Adult Children

The midlife d.c. woman whose children are grown feels more freedom to respond to intrapsychic demands for individuation, for attention to previously suppressed or denied parts. Previous research and some of our interview data suggest that she will behave more instrumentally, will be more assertive, powerful, dominant. For the d.c. woman, this is evidenced by her increased attention to her occupational role. Yet, unless she has had a continuous work history, she may find herself in the incongruent position of having entry status professionally, and established status socially, She may have internal needs to express dominance, yet be in a position where that is organizationally inappropriate. Overtly stated high achievement needs may be accompanied by covert anxiety re competence, her need to be accepted by (younger) work group, her need to prepare for an independent future life (and possibly income.) Our d.c. subjects vividly revealed these themes as they spoke.

One 49 year old woman said, "...Here I am on a peer level with people of another generation, which is exciting; but also, there's a disequilibrium there somehow...with my superiors, bosses, teachers who know more than I do, but I'm older than they are...so it's fraught with all kinds of adjustments and problems which I think I'm handling, but it isn't easy."

S.C., 52 years old, had been employed continuously since college but now was in training as an analyst. She says,"...the sense of being on the line again... I have gotten very tired of that. I now feel that nobody else should have to decide; but the fact remains that somebody does... I now have to put my competence on the line...it ought to be that people know I'm competent and that people accept that I know what I'm doing...but I can see if I were running this program...But that's the feeling, I've done it. Now I'm able. Let's not have any more of anybody sitting out there saying you are or are not...I'm going to decide that. Running these hurdles seems more appropriate to youth...(then) I would need that kind of confirmation."

Another complication often experienced by women at this stage is the likli-hood that her spouse is going through a period of self doubt, of introspection, of review of his life work and structure and of ultimately coming to grips with the reality of a modified Dream and Life Structure (Levinson 1978). Just as early marriage necessitates the development of a balance between career and family, so does the midlife career stage. Couples who do not recognize the need for this kind of restructuring process -- and who fail to work at it -- may be the ones who add to the divorce rates, incidence of midlife pathology, alcoholism, etc.

Said one woman who was divorced after 15 years of marriage,"...it was a situation where I was growing and he was not." They had not established the groundwork in their earlier marriage which would allow individual growth to be used to their mutual benefit.

The husband of a 37 year old doctoral woman, worried not only about himself, but also that her increasing attention to career meant pulling away from him and the children. Although she talked vigorously in terms of the additive nature of her work, i.e., that career was to be added to wife/mother roles, the husband said, wistfully," We come together from time to time as needs arise...but the rest of the time we go our separate ways."

It seems that in this case he operates as if their younger marriage structure is still appropriate, while she is functioning with a new set of boundaries and tasks, and that they need to develop a mutually understood, and hopefully, mutually enhancing structure which will facilitate individuation within the context of this intimate relationship.

This couple is dealing with one of the major tasks of the transition to the second half of life.

2. Transition to the Second Half of Life

Stuart (1977) describing the age 30 transition in traditional women, calls it a reassessment "...conceived of as...building a second adult life structure, rather than necessarily a more stable or integrated one, althought this may be true in some cases."(p.115)

Our d.c. case studies seem to indicate that periods of transition have no regular age markers and may instead be experienced one or more times and/or at different life stages. This transition period is often accompanied by feelings of depression, by an emptiness, lack of meaning, existential questioning of self, as seen in the following examples.

For H.J., a 37 year old psychiatric social worker, the transition started very early and was very gradual."...seeds of it probably were when M (first child) was born. I was 24, loved my personal contact with my baby...at the same time I started looking at my life, knowing that I couldn't always be the breast...I'd go downstairs with the baby and there were other people there who had several kids and they were so...vacuous...in a rut...and I started saying to myself, I'm not going to be like that...what happened to my brain? is this what I'm going to end up doing?...I started keeping myself very busy, but not important things, just filling the time...I found more and more I was withdrawing, preferred to read and

to be by myself, then it got worse and worse...After some time, though , I started to meet women who had careers, and I started to get real jealous...I'm no longer jealous...Those women have to still make the choice (about having children) ...a choice I never had to make. So now I feel that I'm in a good place...it was like maybe I never would have learned the other parts of me if I hadn't had the experience of being a mother."

K.S., whose history is presented in the chart we have discussed above, seems to be living out what we have come to label male transitional development. Although she married and had two children by the time she was 24, she never fully experienced any sense of identity with the nurturant, mothering role. She says, "I really didn't like pre-schoolers..." and so she was working full time by the time she was 30. Now, at age 41, she's questioning the course of her life, feeling depressed by the press to continue probing into issues related to her life purpose and meaning.

S.C., age 52 said,"Early years...it was as though I was not fully conscious.. did things as they were supposed to be done...after the birth of my third child was when I began staring out of windows wondering how did all this come about... housekeeping was declining...didn't have the energy for that...becoming depressed." At that point not only did S.C. start reading the existential literature in depth, but she also went back to finish college(and finally to finish an advanced degree.) "What happened in that marriage was that I got stronger, and he got weaker...I discovered more and more ways in which I was able."

After 15 years of marriage, when she was 37, S.C. divorced her husband and then went into a period of acting out, of delayed adolescence she calls it, of experimenting with drugs, sexual relationships, other ways of experiencing herself other patterns of self identification.

This early shifting period was followed by a second transition some years

later, which helped facilitate integration occuring around age 50.

The transition period started later for P.S., age 49. "Until around age 40 I did what was expected of me...without questioning; then I started to feel, is this all there is? I wanted more.I looked around at my friends and my mother and my mother in law...and I thought NO WAY do I want this for the next 40 years... I realized I had to do something...and I started to be pretty depressed and very angry...I met a man...who sort of represented my individuation...like I allowed this other side of myself to finally be...my breaking out of a provincial prison which I had helped to build. It was sort of like a step into the world through him. But (after a while) I really felt that I was starting to split...here was one kind of life, and then there was the other. I really wished that I could be married to two men at the same time."

P.S. continued,"...I also started to feel some real envy toward my husband and his success ...realized it was not mine, and I had to do it for myself...and that it was pretty late. I started to get a panicky feeling...here I was 40 years old, feeling a failure interms of my kids and their rebellion...though I did not want to undo the past...I'm glad I had kids...glad I went through that period even though I feel that now I'm kind of behind...I knew I was capable of something better.

In the course of our analysis of these and other d.c. cases, we recognized that for some women this transition process included an experience with a transitional male figure who symbolized some or all of the following:

-- emergence, recognition and identification with the shadow side; certain denied aspects of self which were now experienced as a second adolescence
-- feelings of depression associated with discontent with present life structure and anxiety about the future
-- a sense of disappointment, that somehow they had lost track of, buried, denied their early identity
-- a sense of excitement and energy that new growth, other feelings, other experiences, other ways of self-identification were possible.

Other women describe a female role model who serves as the catalyst for this transition; one woman said that books had been her inspiration, had served as her transitional object.

3. The Awareness of Death

Recent study on midlife as a development process has focused on the role of death anxiety in relation to the onset of midlfe, citing.e.g., the recognition that one begins to measure life in terms of time left to live; or that one begins to feel the press to leave a legacy, etc.

Jaques(1965) and Levinson(1978) have stated that death anxiety constitutes one of the central midlife issues. Neugarten (1964) describes a female midlife personification of death, with both a recognition of one's own mortality and a rehearsal for widowhood.

Our subjects frequently spoke to these issues. Here, commenting on the impact of life threatening illness are two illustrative cases.

H.J. at age 28 had a near fatal illness."...I think it really put an urgency on...getting my act together. I was very aware that I could have died... made me very aware of my fears of dying."(Her parents had both died of cancer at a young age). She continued," I don't like to be obsessed by death, consciously or unconsciously...but I have this ritualistic thing...I never finish a cup of coffee... and I know why, because it's the end, it's symbolic of death...but I don't do that in my whole life. I do finish tasks."(Significantly, she did finish graduate school).

Thus we see that although H.J. is aware of the symbolism she attaches to all endings, she's still not sure how to handle her fears. Yet she feels mobilized somehow by this fear to "get her act together" i.e., to get on with the tasks of the second half of life.

When S.C. described a recent cancer surgery and the feelings she has about how close she was to death, she said,"...since then I deal more consciously with endings...with the limitations that there are upon life and on relationships

and on experience."

S.C.'s life threatening experience facilitated the process of individuation. She is able to use her experience as a vehicle for increasing her understanding of herself and of the possibilities, as well as the limitations, within which she could develop. She uses the term limitations to mean both a letting go of previous omnipotent fantasies ("before...I wanted to devour the world...") as well as an ability to focus, to finally choose her life direction, to channel her energies.

The legacy. Equivalent male developmental dilemmas re death and death anxieties have been described as the experienced need to establish a legacy, either in a family or occupational sense. The woman in the d.c.family, especially the woman newly entered into a profession, recognizes that the chances are slim that she will have time to really make a mark professionally. Yet,she is propelled by her inner energie to reach out and start the process. Our occupational structure is such that, unless organizations begin to rethink the ways in which this woman's strengths can best be utilized, she is probably going to fall short of her target in terms of leaving something of significance.

S.C. said, "I have come to terms with the fact that it's unlikely that I'll make a significant contribution to theory or something such..."

How women will deal with this issue remains to be seen, since only recently has this midlife woman come into a career path parallelling that of men. But the need is experienced, as the following case illustrates:

P.S. "My dream is to leave some kind of stamp on life...make an impact somewhere...it's exciting to know that now (after her professional training) I'm becoming expert in one area... really feel competent...I feel that I have something to offer.. When I was 30 I was a mother, now I need other things...I'd like to die feeling that in some way I was important in life...don't want to sit around and be useless..."

P.S. speaks for many women when she says that her wife/mother role was only one part of her life; and that she looks on those experiences as preparation for

whatever next step she will take; and that relationships to children and to husband are significant but not stufficient; and that they do not constitute the totality of the legacy she seeks.

The last three issues that we have identified as being of particular relevance to midlife d.c. couples,have emerged from our analysis of how the d.c. woman relates to other significant people in her life. First we'll look at how she sees herself in relation to her husband and children, then in relation to her aging parents, and finally in relation to other women.

4. Additive Nature of Dual Career Woman's Concept of Career

Without exception, the women we interviewed stated that they wanted to live fully in the independent, Individualistic Dream and in the interdependent,Relational Dream. Not always did they find this possible. Some younger women found that they had to make a choice between career and children and chose career; others found that their career development set them on a collision course with their spouse,and still another group found that they could be satisfied with a modified dream, that parts of their Individualistic Dream could co-exist with their Relational Dream.

We heard these d.c. women talking about their career as an addition to whatever else they find significant in life, and not as an exclusive path; e.g.:

S.C." I hadn't given up on home and family...it was that now there should be something more, to keep this, and then go on..."

J.H., "I went back to school with the idea of getting a career in addition. I wanted another role. I didn't want to supplant the roles I now have of wife/mother."

Finally, M.R., our introductory speaker, echoes the major theme,"I want it all."

Another additional family responsibility, frequently described by our subjects is the new position they find themselves in relative to their aging parents.

5. Relationship to Aging Parents

Recognition of the issues related to one's aging parents is certainly not an exclusively female task;and yet it frequently falls (or is taken) to the woman. This sets up another potential conflict between the pressure for self-directed, self-enhancing behavior, reaching out into the wider social system for connection, an the needs for reestablishment of self in relation to parents, for the re-working of unresolved early and regressive issues re parents, as well as the possibility that a certain amount of time will be required for actual physical care.

One subject, P.S., said about her elderly mother, " My mother, even though she lives alone and is doing well, needs me...I am her only living relative...she is a tremendous responsibility. Her happiness and well being...when she had an operation last February, that took a month out of my life. I had to be available... I want to be... I feel that is my responsibility."

Case B.D., age 45, focusing on her responsibility to her aging mother, used that situation as the straw that broke her newly formed work system. Her story illustrates what we call the revolving door syndrome, and is another example of a midlfe person with no work experience outside her home. Having gotten herself professionally and psychically ready to move into the career world, she is turned back by what she sees as compelling family obligations. In this case, however, B.D. herself is part of the problem ; in colluding with, a) returning children (divorced daughter came home with big dog; second daughter living at home after college, no plans); b) husband planning partial retirement (when he announced that he'd be working only three days a week, she thought, "but that means I have to be there to give him lunch all those days!") and c) " I just put my mother into a nursing home and I feel so guilty it's killing me."

B.D. is experiencing great conflict because she feels that her professional life, just recently launched, is completely at odds with what she "should" do. She gets no support for her career ambitions from either her husband or her children. Instead, they seem to have reinstated earlier demands on her time for nurturance and attention. She is there to give it, complaining, but colluding.

Having lived all her life as "reflected person,"i.e. his wife, their mother and not having developed a joint pattern with her spouse enabling marriage to be used as an arena to enhance mutual growth, she's up against the need to create a new balance,a new structure, without a history that supports her independent development.

As suggested, B.D. has fallen back into her old pattern of listening to everyone else's needs and ignoring her own. At least that is what she tells herself. However, it seems apparent, that by falling back into old nurturant behaviors, she avoids having to deal with all the new issues brought about by her entry into a professional field as midlife person. Furthermore, it seems that by expressing guilt toward the fact of her mother's age and illness, B.D. is avoiding recognition not only of her mother's approaching death, but also of the irreversibility of her own aging process.

In addition to the need for developing new patterns of relating to spouse, children and parents, our research has revealed that there is also an apparent shift in the way midlife women regard each other, as the following discussion indicat

6. Midlife Women's View of Other Women

Very preliminary findings emerging from our case studies suggest that midlife women develop a changed viewpoint in their relationships toward other women. There is apparently a new sense of other women as colleagues, peers, of other women as equals, of other women as objects of identification. Earlier aspects of competition and/or sexual rivalry seem to be altered and a new sense of appreciation of femininity appears.:

S.C." I have a sense of coming to a new place with regard to other women... that I can establish peer relationships with other women is exciting..."

P.S." This is new. It used to be, from the time I was in high school, I always had an important male...to look to." Now she knows other women, "Who think like I do." Knowing these women had given her a certain amount of security when she wonders whether or not she can make it on her own.

K.S. "It's women who now seem more exciting to me...to have more interest and appeal...part of me needs very much to be with other women."

K.S. found that her female colleagues were able to share important feelings with her, at a time when she and her husband seemed locked out of communication.

This new sense of affiliation with other women has not been identified as a mentoring, but rather as a colleagial relationship. Interestingly enough, only one of our d.c.subjects experienced any kind of mentoring.(Her mentor was a male supervisor.) This stands in sharp contrast to the significance of the mentoring relationship as reported in the literature dealing with male midlife development. Further research into the questioning of the role of mentors for professional women is indicated.

What feels new to the women we interviewed is knowing and identifying with other women as equals..not as mother, not as daughter...but as equals. This equality serves to reinforce an emergent sense of strength and an honoring of the feminine aspects of self. Our subjects seemed surprised and pleased to discover this new part of themselves.

The above discussion of some midlife issues which confront couples trying to manage the multiple tasks connected with individual, family and career development, has indicated some of the complexities of the d.c. structure. Now we turn to an analysis of the responses we got when we asked d.c.couples how they coped with the stresses inherent in this very complicated multi-system.

1V. COPING STRATEGIES

Within the newness of the d.c. system, some tentative patterns of adaptation and maladaptation can be identified. We will briefly review some of the themes as discovered from our case studies, including patterns of;

A. Structural changes in the traditional marriage pattern

B. One,or both,partners take up stagnant position in terms of growth

C. One or both partners assumes a regressive position

D Marriage system dissolves

E.Enhanced opportunities for growth and individuation for both partners

A. Structural changes in the traditional marriage pattern

Some d.c.couples are developing non-traditional strategies for coping with the demands of marriage, children and two careers. For example, a few couples told us that career demands might require them to live in separate cities; others, though happily married told us that they were seriously contemplating divorce for financial reasons. The following case is illustrative of a d.c. couple who have made significan structural changes in the traditional pattern.

H.T. and her husband M have been married nine years. They are a non-traditiona couple from many points of view. Not only are they currently working on three careers, his, hers and Baby K,age 3, but they have reversed traditional family roles. She is the prime income producer; he retired from full time work when baby was born; he seems to take great pleasure in domestic work; she's happier out of the house.

M says: Parenting is a great substitute for working in terms of one's self-esteem...to get you through life on a day to day basis...When I'm not really busy (as a free lance musician) being home with the kid ...and just running the household, is a perfectly acceptable, very nice alternative to worrying about not working...good to fall back on ...most men don't have that.

We had a strong dual career thing even before K was born...shared responsibility for finances, for stuff around the house...the whole thing...to make this work, we need total flexibility...and we had it..

B. One or more partners take up stagnant position in terms of personal growth

When one partner's personal development far outdistances the other's, the marriage balance may then shift out of control. This seems to be the case in the first marriage for S.C. She was growing, he was not. Their marriage relationship could not adapt to the changes brought about by her career entry and independent development. S.C. originally saw herself as a very traditional wife/mother, first

helping to support the family while husband went back to school, then working part time for 15 years to share the family financial burdens. However, as soon as she seriously entered into a full time commitment to her own work, the husband regarded her behavior as a pulling away from him and as threatening. He wanted life the way it had been...she knew it would never be the same again.

C. One or both partners assumes a regressive position

Certain d.c. women, venturing into full time professional work at midlife find that goals they had in mind are unrealistic, perhaps fantasies of achievement, illusive. Some find the sacrifices demanded by professional career demands to be more than they bargained for. These women change their direction and return, positively, to a former relational life style.

Other d.c.subjects reveal a negative, regressive position in response to the stress of midlife career entry.

B.D., the revolving door syndrome discussed above, illustrates this option. Having briefly experimented with other parts of herself within a career framework, she quickly pulls back to a former pattern of self identification once an obstable (opportunity?) presents itself.

D. Marriage system dissolves

MIdlife d.c. marriages which dissolved when the wife committed more heavily to an external role, upon examination, showed seeds of discontent much earlier in the family cycle.

For some couples, young children serve as a distraction to a basic disequilibrium. For these people, a restructuring is required once the children have grown and the wife begins to look at herself in non-relational terms.

For case N.M., age 39, the critical decision revolved around the issue of having children. She married very young, and after years of not being able to become pregnant, N found herself more and more involved in her career and less

willing to interrupt that process. However, at that point, her husband had come to feel that he very much wanted to have children. N.M. describes her 15 years of marriage as a very weak system, which could not withstand this deep, and basic disagreement. Once she determined not to have children, the marriage soon broke up.

A. Enhanced opportunities for growth and individuation for both partners

The most fortunate couples were those for whom the d.c. relationship served to enhance individual opportunities for growth and individuation, though even for these people, it seems it was not without a struggle.

In spite of several years of difficulties, both P.S. and her husband want their marriage to last. She said:

> We re-negotiated our marriage. My going back to school necessitated some real changes...my husband and I sat down one Sunday and we re-negotiated everything...we went through every single thing that needed to be done, even including affection and support...and developed a contract...it was about five pages long...and we signed it...

Another couple, both very committed to making their d.c. marriage work, have a system where they seem to take turns in terms of career dominance. Hall & Hall (1979) and others describe this alternation of emphasis as one of the most successful adaptations.

S.C. eloquently voices the most individuated position of any of the women we interviewed, and the most satisfied with her loving relationship. She takes the opening statement "I want it all" which introduced this paper, and both enriches it and limits it through her own successful integration.

> There was just the wife/mother...and then just the career... in different parts...always sort of separated...I could be here, as wife/mother (female) and there, the intellectual achiever (male)...I think I bought into a system that said one is less than the other...then...to bring all that together in one place..it's still ongoing...but I have come to recognize... and honor...both.

S.C. had talked about an earlier sense of wanting to devour the world, to do everything. But that sense, which she saw as a kind of vitality and energy,

> didn't have any place to employ itself. Now I have a place to employ that to use myself effectively, and appropriately...That sense of limitation is not a negative thing, but it is a channeling...still have the same

> energy, but now it's more directed, more conscious, more effective... and I can enjoy it more.

Having come to terms with herself in the sense of altering her own traditional expectations of the "female role", at age50 S.C. went through a period of time believing that career accomplishment and significant work would be sufficiently fulfilling. She said, "I was content to become a wise old woman."

To her amazement, she found herself deeply in love and conscious of a new awareness that work alone was not enough, was not sufficient for the total sense of what she wanted to be. So although she is in effect repeating the "I want it all" statement, her position now reflects a mature sense of the reality of limitations. Her statement summarizes the most positive D.C. pattern that we found:

> ... it's been a combination of internal pressure plus the circumstances that on the one hand made things possible and the other made things impossible; opened up here and closed off there...not a feeling of crusading, but more a feeling of doing what I had to do, and delighted that I was able...
>
> From back then when I found out that I could earn a living...the feeling has been one of wider possibilities and freeing up confidence and strength in me that made whatever riskiness there was well worth it...it felt good.
>
> At this point in my life...to begin to be in harmony with limitations...to accept limitations...to recognize when they're there, finally...but not too soon...To believe in the possibility of accomplishment and the possibility of limitation.

V. SUMMARY

We have presented some early finding from our on-going study of the d.c. family. Viewing this non-traditional structure from a systems perspective, we have discussed some of the psychosocial complexities inherent in the d.c. marriage. In studying d.c. couples as they work their way through significant midlife issues, certain patterns of coping and adaptation have been identified and described through illustrative cases.

Although a discussion of intervention strategies and timetables is beyond the scope of this paper, we have recognized certain high stress points where counseling might be indicated, e.g. couples in the decision stage re children; couples trying to balance marriage demands with uneven individual growth patterns; couples who find themselves confronted with midlife issues without having a previously developed mechanism for

change.

One final comment seems appropriate. Although we have become accutely sensitive to the multiple difficulties that face d.c.couples, we have also become aware of the enriched possibilities for individual growth and mutual development. The people we interviewed recognize that newness and lack of experience means they had to work harder at their complicated life style. But the payoffs, as far as they can see, are worth the effort. Critical to success seems to be an abundance of good health, physical and emotional. Who knows which comes first? Perhaps we will find, given contemporary social realities, that the d.c. pattern itself ultimately enhances health and stability. What is apparent to us, however, is that energy, joy and vigor are clearly evident, along with the pain, stress and struggle.

DUAL CAREER SUBJECTS

SUBJECT	AGE	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL (Wife only)	FAMILY STAGE	DECISION ABOUT CHILDREN
JA & T	JA 26: T: 32	M.A.	No children	They will have children
JL & B	JL:23; B: 22	B.A.	No children	No decision
W.M.	25	B.A.	No children	No decision
C.G.	27	B.A.	No children	Not till she's 30
N.R.	32	H.S.	No children	She wants family; Husband does not
B.L.	33	B.A.	No children	Trying to become pregna
N.M.	39	M.A.	No children, Divorced	Issue of children was central to divorce
M.R.	32	B.A.	Pregnant	
HT&M	HT:30; M:31	M.A.	one cnild; age 3	
D.L.	35	M.B.A.	two children: 11, 13	
A.E.	38	Ph.D.	two children; 8,11. (Second marriage)	
M.B.	40	M.A.	two children; 10,12	
C&B	C: 40; B:45	M.A.	two children; 16,22 (Second marriage)	
H.J &S	HJ: 37; S:40	M.S.W.	three children;9,11 and 13	
K.S.	41	M.A.	two children; 19,21	
B.D.	45	B.A.	four children; ages 14-24)	
P.S.	49	M.A.	two children; 14,19	
S.C.	52	Ph.D.	three children; 25, 28,30. (divorced twice;now living with man in permanent non-married relationship	

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